

*4.1 History of The Corridors***4.1 KEY HISTORICAL FEATURES OF THE CORRIDORS**

- **Elgin Street**

Elgin is a 3 mile long thoroughfare extending from Bagby to Calhoun in the Midtown area of the Central City ( West of Bagby it links to Westheimer Road). Since the 1920s, Elgin Street has been a link to the most important educational, cultural, recreational, and health service resources for the African-American community in Houston.

When the Fourth Ward began to decline as the economic center of commercial and residential development for African Americans in Houston, the Third Ward began to emerge as the cultural and business center of Black Houston.

On February 8, 1926, Jack Yates High School was opened with 17 teachers and 600 students. James D. Ryan was the first principal. When the high school relocated, the facility on Elgin Street became a middle school under his name.

In 1927, this location (Jack Yates High School) became the home of the Houston Colored Junior College and was authorized by the Houston Independent School District Board in September of that year. It became a four-year college in 1934 and renamed, The Houston College for Negroes. It remained at 2610 Elgin until 1947 when it was bought by the state and renamed, The Texas College for Negroes. It later became known as Texas Southern University.

On June 19, 1926, a hospital building, that no longer exists, was dedicated as the Houston Negro Hospital and was built with funds donated by Texaco. This hospital became the only facility in Houston where Black doctors could hold residency and where nurses that trained at Prairie View A&M College could practice.

In the early 1900's, a property at the intersection of Hutchins and Elgin Street was purchased by African Americans for park development. The park was named Emancipation Park and turned over to the City of Houston during the Campbell administration.

At the intersection of Elgin and Dowling is a commercial building which used to house a restaurant on it's first level. On it's second level was the El Dorado Ballroom, a popular nightclub where Duke Ellington and Count Basie often performed.

Today Elgin Street links Houston Community College to the west at Main Street and the University of Houston at Scott Street to the East. The section of street from Highway 59 to Scott Street remains an important "cultural corridor" for Houston's African-Americans. Located directly on Elgin, within one or two blocks north or south, are several vital institutions, including the Shape Community Center, the Martin Luther King Center, Families Under Urban and Social Attack ("F.U.U.S.A."), Riverside General Hospital (formerly Houston Negro Hospital), Riverside Health Clinic, Third Ward Multi-Service Center, and Project Row Houses.

- **Blodgett Street**

Blodgett Street is the main artery through the Washington Terrace Subdivision and connects directly to the Wheeler/Blodgett light rail station. Over the years, Blodgett has been a largely residential street. African-Americans began moving into the area in the 1960s. Prior to that, the area had primarily white and Jewish residents.

Small commercial areas occur in pockets both east and west of Highway 59 along Blodgett. At Blodgett and Fannin, a group of floral retail shops have remained there for several years serving the Texas Medical Center. A strip commercial center between LaBranch and Crawford Streets housed a popular nightclub called Club Laveek (now closed) and several small retail shops and service businesses. In past years, there have been viable businesses at the intersections of Blodgett and Almeda, Blodgett and Dowling, Blodgett and Live Oak, and Blodgett and Ennis.

*4.1 History of The Corridors, cont'd*

In the early seventies, a medical office owned by Dr. John B. Coleman existed at Blodgett and Almeda, and an office for the Black Organization for Leadership Development ("B.O.L.D."). Today the intersection has a fast food restaurant, a floral shop, and a landscape services office.

The Blodgett and Dowling intersection has an office building once occupied by the National Urban League. During the 1970's three corners of that intersection have housed auto repair and other automotive related businesses.

At Blodgett and Live Oak there is a larger commercial area which includes Unity Bank (formerly Riverside Bank), Family Café, a former grocery store, and a strip center with small retail stores. Nearby are former service stations which are now used as car wash and auto repair facilities.

The intersection of Blodgett and Ennis has small commercial strip buildings which house small retail shops that were built around 1960. Near this corner, during the 50's and 60's, there was an office occupied on one level by John S. Chase Architects and on the second level by a pharmacy owned by Gaston Leland, brother of late Congressman Mickey Leland.

Further east along Blodgett is Pilgrim Congregational Church. On the north side of Blodgett is the church sanctuary, a day care facility, and church parking lot. Directly opposite the church sanctuary, on the south side of Blodgett, is the church's community center, after school facility, and administrative offices(housed in a former residence).

Texas Southern University("TSU") to the north virtually surrounds the church sanctuary. Further east along Blodgett there were 2-story walk-up apartment buildings until the late 1970's. During the 1990's, most of these buildings were either bought by TSU and demolished to build new student housing, or renovated and reused as student housing. TSU's current master plan, which was finalized in 2002, shows that all remaining buildings in this area will be replaced with student housing.

- **Old Spanish Trail** The Old Spanish Trail was developed as a national highway that ran from San Diego, California to Saint Augustine, Florida. A stretch of the road in Texas ran from the Louisiana border at Orange, Texas, through Beaumont, Houston, and San Antonio, and on through El Paso, Texas. The name was chosen by an organization formed in 1915 in Mobile, Alabama to promote the construction of this transcontinental highway. By 1929 the highway was completed.

An 1829 map drawn by Stephen F. Austin shows Opelousas Road as an east-west trail going down to Harrisburg (now Houston). The same map shows that a trail existed from what is now Houston to what is now San Antonio.

Over the past thirty years, OST has become one of the most important commercial streets of the African-American community in Houston. The road links the community with the Texas Medical Center to the west, and also to Main Street and the former Astrodome.

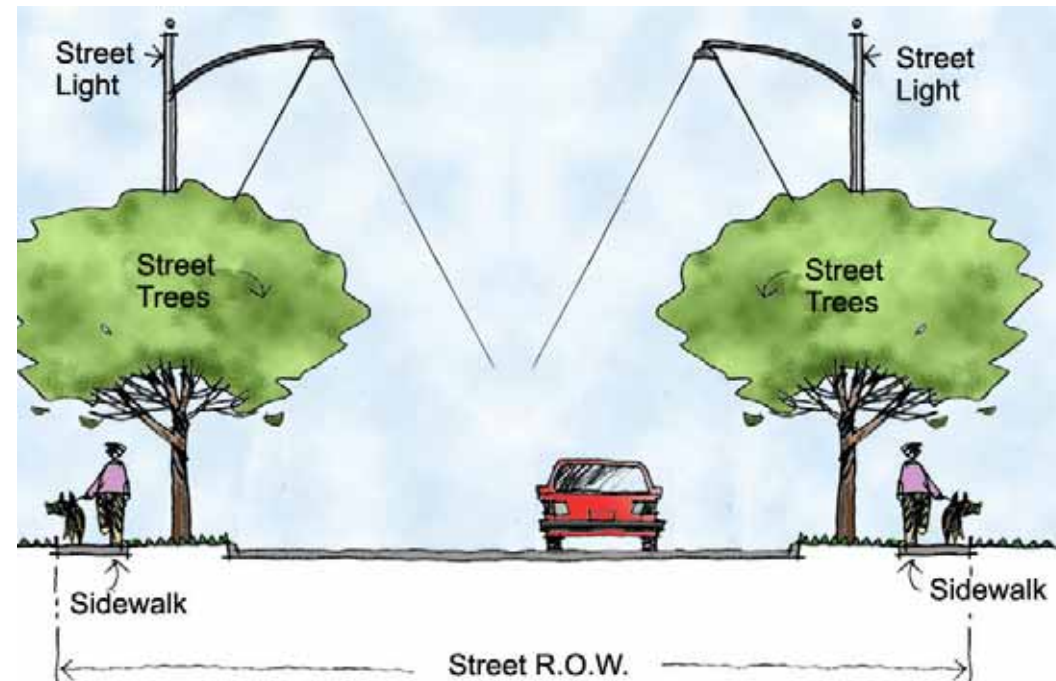


**4.2 DEFINITION OF PUBLIC RIGHT-OF-WAY IMPROVEMENTS:**

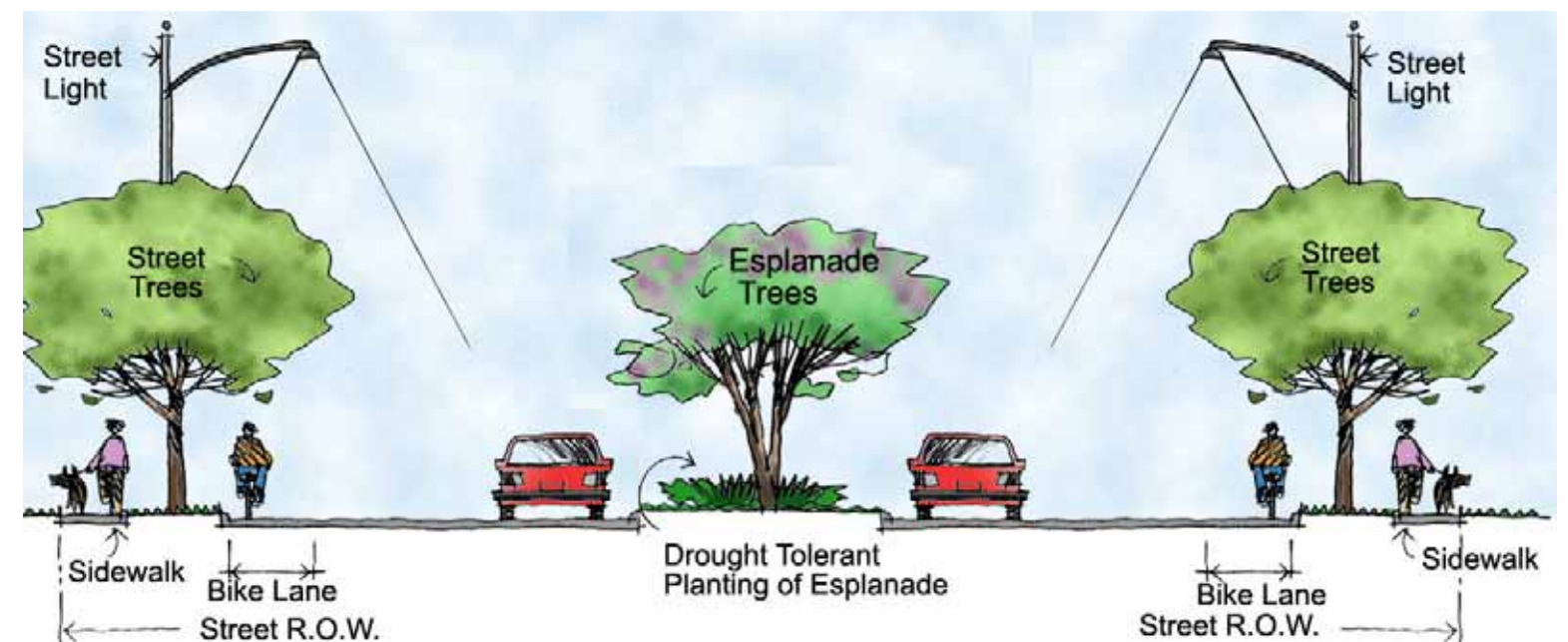
The scope of work for this study includes the area within the public right-of-way. This is defined as the area between the legal property lines in which the public roadway, sidewalks, and utilities are located. The configuration of public rights-of-way varies for each street type. The accompanying drawings illustrate two typical conditions that occur within the corridor study areas. While this study does explore the integration of public and private properties with regards to function and design, the design proposals apply only to the area within the public right-of-way.

*The proposed design elements under consideration are as follows:*

- Street Lights
- Landscaping
- Signage/Monuments
- Special Paving
- Sidewalks/Ramps
- Seating Areas
- Parking/Service Area Screening
- Bus Shelters
- Public Art
- Street Furniture
- Bicycle Facilities
- Architectural Guidelines



**SECTION B: Single Pavement Width**



**SECTION A: Divided Roadway With Median**

### 4.3 DESIGN CRITERIA

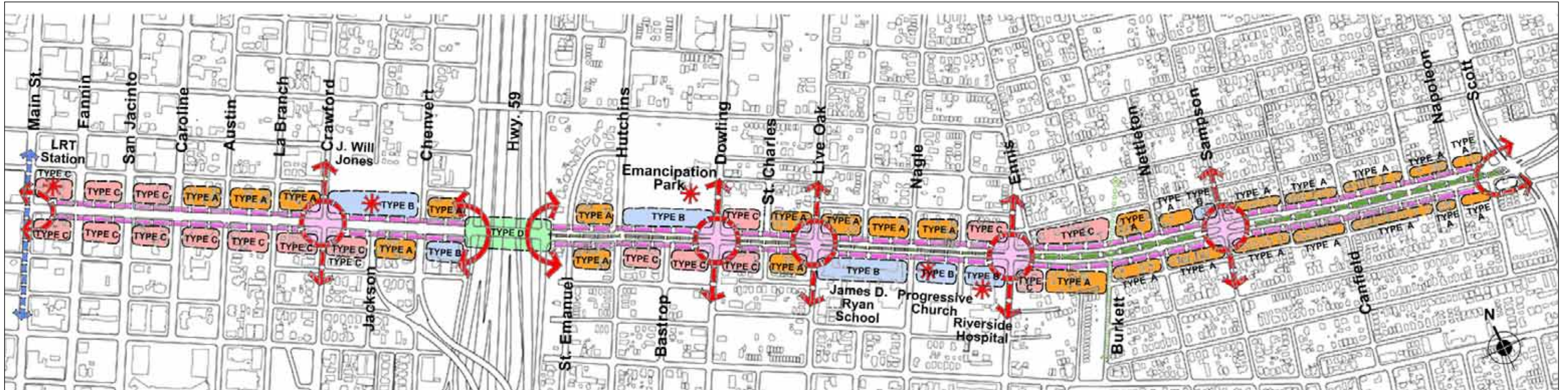
Based upon a thorough review of the existing site conditions and the potential external influences that affect how people view and utilize the corridors, the consultant team prepared a landscape analysis diagram for each corridor. In the development of the landscape analysis diagrams, several key factors were considered to determine the extent and appropriateness of potential public improvements. The consultant team was interested in how land use, traffic and transit systems, infrastructure, and prominent institutions affect and influence the streetscape character of each corridor. While this study did not explore what land uses were appropriate along the corridors, the type of land use has a direct affect on the scope and type of landscape treatments that are appropriate in each of the conditions studied. For example, single family residential properties require less pedestrian amenities since there is less pedestrian activity. This results in smaller sidewalks and less infrastructure. Commercial properties have a higher concentration of pedestrian activities and thus require larger sidewalks and more amenities to promote commercial activity in these areas.















Other factors analyzed were the primary automobile routes and key north-south intersections. Along with automobile circulation, the current mass transit opportunities and distribution was explored, as well as how the distribution of these facilities could be enhanced through the development of the streetscape amenities. These north-south intersections are important because they tend to have higher concentrations of retail, transit and pedestrian uses. In addition, they also provide key decision points for navigating through Third Ward.

Key landmarks, historical buildings, and institutions were mapped and reviewed for their influence upon the visual character of the corridor as well as their effect on pedestrian and transit activities. How visitors and residents to the area navigate the corridors was explored to determine if existing wayfinding systems were adequate in the area to allow for efficient travel to destinations within the corridor. A final key aspect reviewed in detail was physical and perceived edges of the corridor and whether existing conditions were adequate to define where the corridor stopped and started within Third Ward.

The landscape analysis diagrams provide the basis to determine inadequacies in the current site conditions, what improvements are needed, and the potential cost for providing these improvements.



**LEGEND:**

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|---|--|---|---|
|  | <b>TYPE A</b> - Predominant land use is residential.<br>- 4-5 ft. wide sidewalk with green space at curb & property line.<br>- Side or front loaded building setback from property line.   |   | <b>Single Street Beautification</b><br>- Street light.<br>- Landscape planting.<br>- Wayfinding/historic signage. |
|  | <b>TYPE B</b> - Predominant land use is institutional with some commercial & multi-family.<br>- 4-5 ft. wide sidewalk.<br>- Parking/service area landscape screen.<br>- Building setback from property line.<br>- Parking located at or near property line.  |   | <b>Wide Blvd. 25 ~ 30 ft.</b>   |
|  | <b>TYPE C</b> - Predominant land use is commercial/and or office.<br>- Paving from curb to property line.<br>- Trees in tree wells.<br>- Buildings located at or near property line.<br>- Parking to rear or side of building.<br>- Pedestrian seating areas & other uses.<br>- Building height 1-4 story. |   | <b>Narrow Blvd. +10 ft.</b>   |
|  | <b>TYPE D</b> - Freeway interchange.   |  | <b>Metro Light Rail Line</b>  |
|  | <b>TYPE E</b> - Predominant land use is institutional (medical center).<br>- Minimum 15 ft. wide sidewalk with open space at curb & property line.<br>- Seating areas.<br>- Building height > 4 story.   |   | <b>Major Intersection</b>   |
|  | <b>TYPE F</b> - Adequate, no further improvements needed.  |   | <b>Hike/Bike Trail</b>  |
|   |  |   | <b>Gateway/Monument</b>   |
|   |  |  | <b>Landmark</b>   |

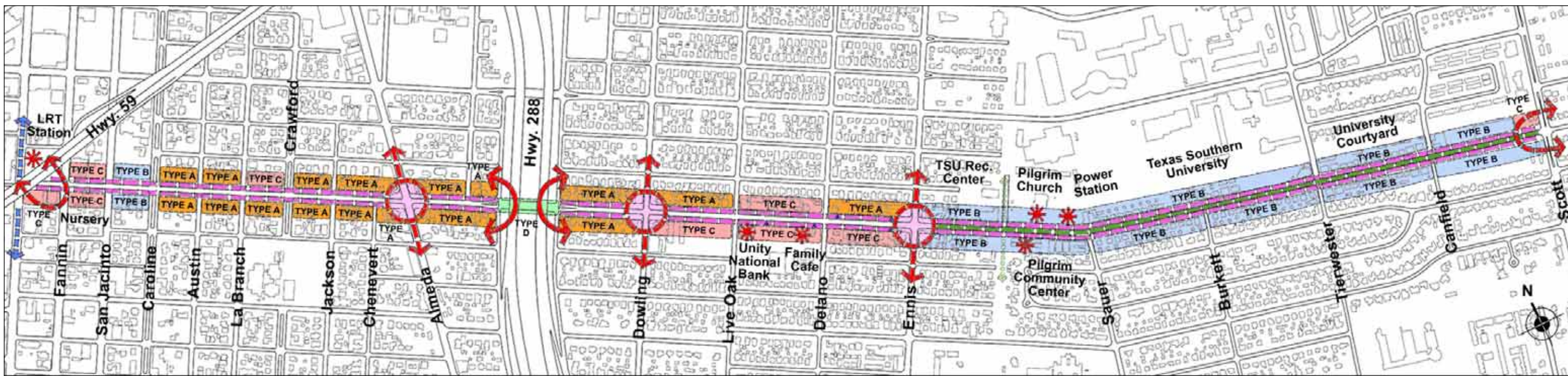
**4.4 ELGIN STREETSCAPE ANALYSIS DIAGRAM**

The Elgin corridor is an important east-west transit street in Third Ward. It is also of historical significance for the African-American community. The corridor has a diverse distribution of land use types with a more urban character to the west near Main Street and transitioning to a predominantly single family land use to the east near Scott Street. Several commercial areas are intermixed along the corridor with concentrations occurring at the Dowling and Ennis intersections. Major north-south streets through the area are Crawford, Dowling, Live Oak, Ennis, Sampson, and most notably, Highway 59. Elgin Street, east of Ennis, has an unusually large landscaped median (±30 feet) that extends east to Scott street. Emancipation Park lies between Hutchins and Dowling and is an important recreational resource along the corridor. Key landmark buildings along Elgin Street are the Eldorado Ballroom at Dowling, Progressive Church, and Riverside Hospital between Nagle and Ennis.

Currently METRO does not provide a direct east-west bus route from Scott Street to Main Street. One route does transit a portion of Elgin Street, but from Dowling to Scott Street there is no east-west bus service. Further discussion of the current mass transit system along Blodgett Street is discussed in section 3.0 of these guidelines.

SEE APPENDIX E FOR PHOTOGRAPHS OF EXISTING LAND USES.





## LEGEND:

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| <p><b>TYPE A</b> - Predominant land use is residential.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 4~5 ft. wide sidewalk with green space at curb &amp; property line.</li> <li>- Side or front loaded building setback from property line.</li> </ul> <p><b>TYPE B</b> - Predominant land use is institutional with some commercial &amp; multi-family.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 4~5 ft. wide sidewalk.</li> <li>- Parking/service area landscape screen.</li> <li>- Building setback from property line.</li> <li>- Parking located at or near property line.</li> </ul> <p><b>TYPE C</b> - Predominant land use is commercial/and or office.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Paving from curb to property line.</li> <li>- Trees in tree wells.</li> <li>- Buildings located at or near property line.</li> <li>- Parking to rear or side of building.</li> <li>- Pedestrian seating areas &amp; other uses.</li> <li>- Building height 1~4 story.</li> </ul> <p><b>TYPE D</b> - Freeway interchange.</p> <p><b>TYPE E</b> - Predominant land use is institutional (medical center).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Minimum 15 ft. wide sidewalk with open space at curb &amp; property line.</li> <li>- Seating areas.</li> <li>- Building height &gt; 4 story.</li> </ul> <p><b>TYPE F</b> - Adequate, no further improvements needed.</p> | <p><b>Single Street Beautification</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Street light.</li> <li>- Landscape planting.</li> <li>- Wayfinding/historic signage.</li> </ul> <p><b>Wide Blvd. 25 ~ 30 ft.</b></p> <p><b>Narrow Blvd. +10 ft.</b></p> <p><b>Metro Light Rail Line</b></p> <p><b>Major Intersection</b></p> <p><b>Hike/Bike Trail</b></p> <p><b>Gateway/Monument</b></p> <p><b>Landmark</b></p> |
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## 4.5 BLODGETT STREETScape ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

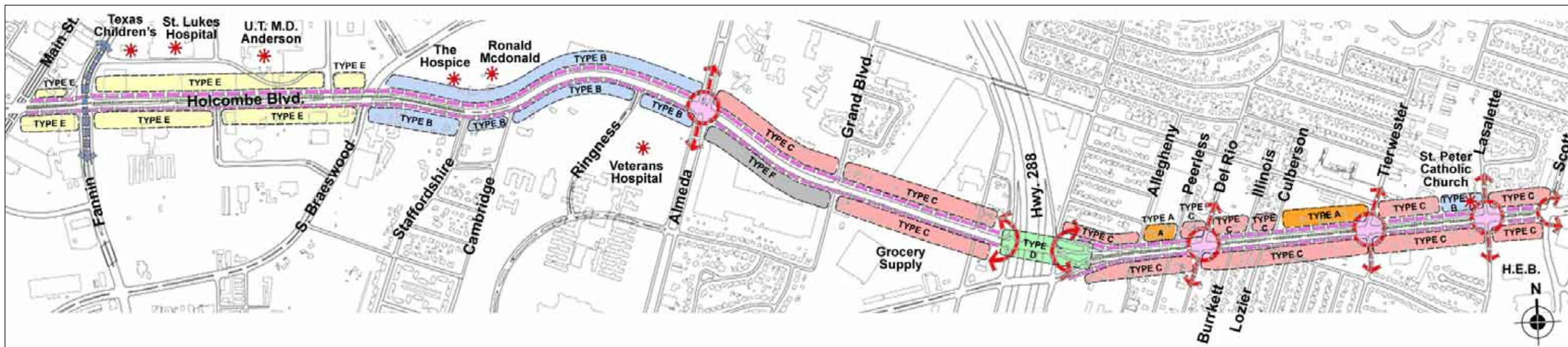
The Blodgett Street corridor is another important east-west transit street in Third Ward. It connects to Main Street on the west, Highway 288, a significant north-south transportation corridor, and the important institution of Texas Southern University ("TSU") to the east. The corridor's land use type is dominated by single family housing and the presence of TSU. TSU owns a significant portion of the property on both sides of Blodgett Street from Ennis to Scott Street. Commercial activity occurs from Main Street to Caroline in the west portion of Blodgett. Another commercial area occurs in the three block area from Dowling to Ennis. In addition to TSU, other notable landmarks or institutions are the Pilgrim Church and Community Center between Ennis and Sauer.

Landsaped medians are present from Ennis to Scott with the roadway having been improved in the last ten years by the City of Houston. From Ennis to Main Street, the right-of-way narrows and the pavement configuration is undivided. A future hike and bike trail will be constructed to the east of Pilgrim Church along an old railroad corridor.

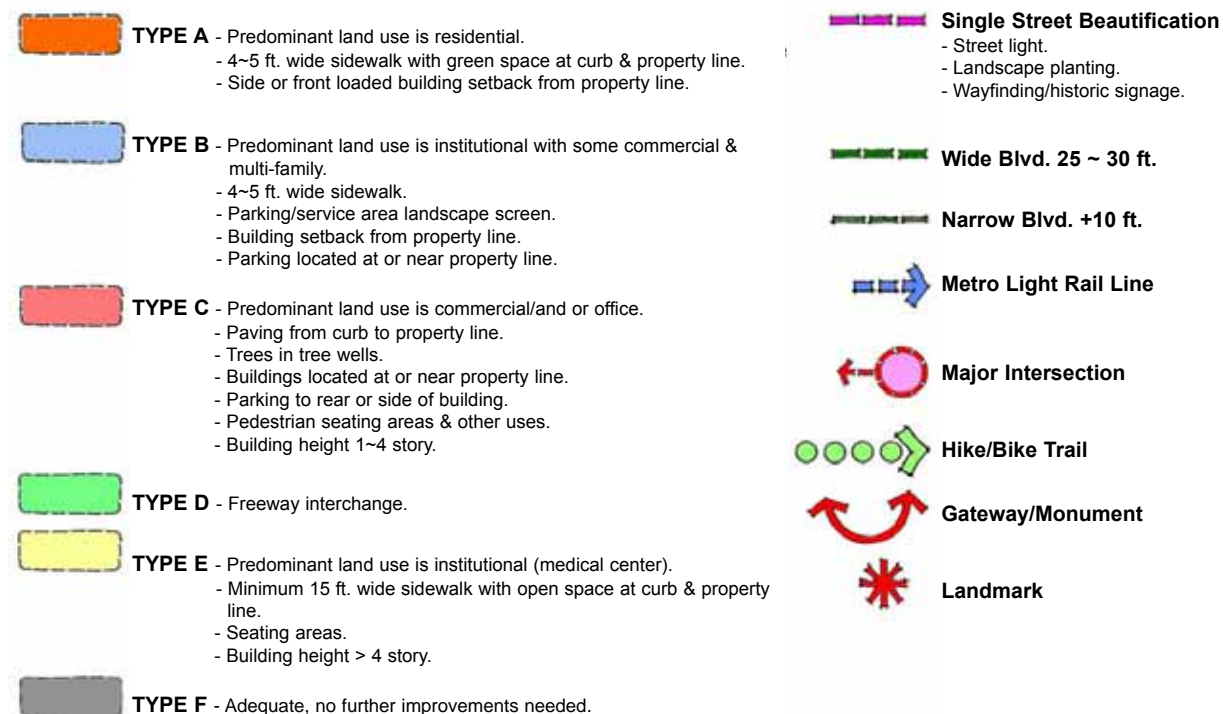
Currently METRO does not provide direct east-west bus service from Scott Street To Main Street. There are only limited north-south routes that traverse through Blodgett. Further discussion of the current mass transit system along Elgin Street is discussed in section 3.0 of these guidelines.

SEE APPENDIX F FOR PHOTOGRAPHS OF EXISTING LAND USES.





## LEGEND:



## 4.6 HOLCOMBE/OLD SPANISH TRAIL STREETScape ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

The Holcombe/Old Spanish Trail Corridor is an important institutional and commercial area for Third Ward. Holcombe, west of Highway 288, extends into the Medical Center and connects to Main Street on the west. The predominant land use is institutional along Holcombe west of Highway 288, and predominantly commercial east of Highway 288 along Old Spanish Trail up to Scott Street. The right-of-way is very narrow east of Highway 288, approximately ten feet from the back of curb, which makes future landscape development very difficult. There are no single-family residential properties directly on Holcombe/Old Spanish Trail, however, two new apartment complexes are currently being built between Tierwester and Del Rio. Notable landmarks or institutions along the corridor are the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, Veterans Hospital at Ringness, and the Ronald McDonald House at Cambridge along Holcombe. St. Peter's Church at La Salette provides a significant community resource along Old Spanish Trail. Landscaped medians are present from Main Street to Staffordshire along Holcombe, and then again from Highway 288 to Scott Street.

METRO has direct east-west bus service along the corridor as well as numerous north-south connections. In addition, this corridor is currently being considered for future advanced high-capacity transit service. Further discussion of the current mass-transit system along Holcombe/Old Spanish Trail is discussed in section 3.0 of these guidelines.

SEE APPENDIX G FOR PHOTOGRAPHS OF EXISTING LAND USES.